

SELF CARE

Part II: Cuts, Scrapes and Stitches Caring for Wounds

When do I need stitches?

You can close small cuts with special tape, called butterfly tape, or special adhesive strips, such as Steri-Strips. You may need stitches if the wound is deep, the edges will not stay together or the edges are jagged. If the wound does not close easily, call your doctor. Stitches can help reduce the amount of scarring. Stitches are removed in three to 14 days, depending on where the cut is located. Areas that move, such as over or around the joints require more time to heal.

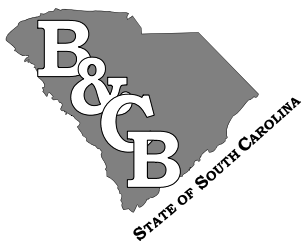
Do I need a tetanus shot?

Tetanus is a serious infection you can get after a wound. The infection is also called "lockjaw," because stiffness of the jaw is the most frequent symptom. To prevent tetanus infection you will need a tetanus shot if you haven't had at least three doses before or haven't had a dose in the last 10 years. The best way to avoid tetanus infection is to talk to your family doctor to make sure your shots are up to date.

Call your family doctor if any of the following things occur

- ◆ The wound is jagged.
- ◆ The wound is on your face.
- ◆ The edges of the cut gape open.
- ◆ The cut has dirt in it that will not come out.
- ◆ The cut becomes tender or inflamed.
- ◆ The cut drains a thick, creamy, grayish fluid.
- ◆ You start to run a temperature over 100°F.
- ◆ The area around the wound feels numb.
- ◆ You cannot move comfortably.
- ◆ Red streaks form near the wound.
- ◆ It's a puncture wound or a deep cut and you have not had a tetanus shot in the past five years.
- ◆ The cut bleeds in spurts, blood soaks through the bandage or the bleeding does not stop after 10 minutes of firm, direct pressure.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians



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